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# LETTERS

## *Testing*

In connection with recent discussions of the multiple-choice physics tests administered by the Educational Testing Service,\* it should be pointed out that there are no restrictions on how many times a student can take the Graduate Record Examination. Many students are aware of this and take the examination repeatedly. For example, students could take and did take identical advanced physics tests in November 1961 and in January 1962. In many cases students who got low scores the first time, received excellent scores the second time. Many of them submitted only the excellent scores with their applications.

It would appear that the scores should not be taken seriously unless all the scores are available that a student has obtained previously and unless it is known how many times he took identical tests. In the past, the Educational Testing Service has not provided this information, but ETS has indicated that it might be willing to do so in the future.

When the danger of using the same test repeatedly was called to the attention of ETS in 1961, the reply was, "Since each of the Advanced Tests is a three-hour, comprehensive test which keeps the examinee busy, it is unlikely that he will be able to reproduce many questions with any appreciable degree of accuracy." After evidence was submitted to ETS showing the dramatic improvement in scores upon repetition of tests and after much prodding, ETS finally agreed to look into this problem. For this purpose it sent its "security officer" to interview repeaters and discovered that "the scores have been affected by the fact that the candidates were able to recall specific topics covered by the test. The fact that the same form was used was cited as being of help to the repeater." This finding came apparently as a great surprise to ETS although it had been known to many physics departments for a long time.

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## \* References

1. B. Hoffmann, Testing, *Physics Today*, October 1961, p. 38.
2. R. B. Gray, letter, *Physics Today*, February 1962, p. 62.
3. R. Hart, letter, *Physics Today*, February 1962, p. 62.
4. F. J. Fornoff, Objective Tests—All Bad?, *Physics Today*, April 1962, p. 36.
5. B. Hoffmann, letter, *Physics Today*, June 1962, p. 80.
6. R. Hart, letter, *Physics Today*, July 1962, p. 66.

## *Material on Michelson Wanted*

For a biography of my father, the late Albert A. Michelson (1852–1931), physicist and first American Nobel Laureate in the sciences, I would appreciate manuscripts, letters, photographic material, or memories.

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